

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR****INFORMATION SERVICE****FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

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Annual sealing operations on the Pribilof Islands in the Bering Sea will begin about June 25 and it is hoped that 75,000 or more skins will be taken, Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior, announced today.

Last season only 48,000 skins were taken, due in part to the fact that many of the seals reached their northern rookeries too late for their pelts to be in prime condition.

As of last August, the Pribilof seal herd numbered slightly less than 3,000,000 animals. This herd includes more than 80 percent of all the fur seals in the world.

In 1910 when the Federal government took over direct management of the herd, it included only 130,000 seals. The increase in the size of the herd since then has been one of the triumphs of intelligent conservation, Dr. Gabrielson declared.

"Our aim has been to bring this herd back to its normal size", he said, "and take only surplus males. We have been able to protect the growth of this herd and at the same time take nearly 1,500,000 pelts during the years of government management.

"The Pribilof seal herd is one of the most valuable possessions of the United States and millions of dollars have gone into the Treasury from the sale of furs and by-products."

Under an international agreement the herd is managed exclusively by the United States and proceeds are apportioned between the United States and Canada. The United States receives 80 percent and Canada 20 of the furs taken.

Due to labor shortages at present only about 50,000 skins a year can be processed and the demand is considerably greater than the supply. Last month when 23,000 skins were offered for sale at auction in St. Louis a greater number of buyers were in attendance than had been the case with any auction of furs previously held in the United States.

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